

Culture of the New Independent States (NIS)

Headstart/First Semester European I School

Selected Aspects of the New Independent States Religion/Culture

**Volume I: Country Area Studies--Ukraine, Belarus,
Georgia, Armenia**

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**Defense Language Institute
Foreign Language Center**

Introduction

1. Overview This section provides country area studies for the following countries: (a) Ukraine, (b) Belarus, (c) Georgia, and (d) Armenia. It also includes an Answer Key and Glossary.

2. Intent The following perspectives are helpful when considering the importance of country area studies for Military Intelligence linguists.

a. Mandate The country area studies included fulfill, in part, the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center's mandate from the National Security Agency. Concerning Area Study Requirements, the National Security Agency/Central Security Service guidance concerning Cryptologic Final Learning Objectives states:



"In addition to acquiring language proficiency and skills, the DLI basic course graduate should have a basic understanding of a variety of topics as they relate to the target culture and should possess a functional general vocabulary related to each of them...These topics include...

Cultural and Social. Sufficient cultural, social, and historical knowledge to understand sports, holidays, customs, social taboos, cultural observances or events, as well as significant expressions of inter-cultural or intra-societal relations and conditions." (Enclosure 4. General Intelligence Final Learning Objectives: Area Study Requirements. National Security Agency/Central Security Service Memorandum dated 18 December 1992, p. 17.)

b. Significance of Religion For each country area study, religious dimensions of culture receive specific attention. This treatment is based, in part, upon the findings of Professor Samuel Huntington, who writes, *"The central elements of any culture or civilization are language*

and religion." (The Clash of Civilization and the Making of World Order, p. 59.) (For amplification of the importance of culture/religion content final learning objectives, see the introduction to this text, plus Unit 1 "Cultural Awareness" and Unit 5 "Gestures and Taboos.")

c. Culture Importance LTC Douglas Scalard, US Army, addresses the tremendous need for cultural understanding in his recent (July-August 1997) Military Review article entitled "People of Whom We Know Nothing: When Doctrine Isn't Enough." After addressing the new global roles for US Armed Forces in the conduct of unconventional missions, LTC Scalard writes:

"We often make only half-hearted efforts to understand the people with whom we will be dealing...as a US Marine Corps general with extensive peace operations experience told a 1994 US Army Command and General Staff College (USACGSC) Class,

'You have to understand the culture you're getting involved in. We never do a good job of cultural intelligence, of understanding what makes people tick, what their structure is, where authority lies, what is different about their values and their way of doing business.'



Cultural bias limits our ability to understand what is going on around us and often prevents commanders from making informed decisions."

d. Peace Operations Peace Operations (Operations Other Than War, Support and Sustainment Operations) present unique challenges for US Armed Forces personnel. Among those applicable to military linguists are the following.

(1) Mission Awareness of cultural/religious influence within an area of operations enables intelligence analysts to fulfill an important aspect of their peace operations mission.

"The analysis [of the local area] includes...ethnic backgrounds, languages, and religious beliefs; tribe, clan, and subclan loyalties;...holiday and religious observances practiced by the local populace." (FM 100-23, Peace Operations, p. 46.)

In addition, "[a]ll personnel involved in peace operations must receive training on the customs of the local population and coalition partners." (FM 100-23, p. 88.)

Often, military linguists, civil military personnel and unit ministry teams (chaplains and chaplain assistants) become the on-the-ground experts for training units in these sensitive cultural areas.



(2) Complexities In his helpful article entitled "Military Stability and Support Operations: Analogies, Patterns and Recurring Themes," military historian Lawrence Yates discusses the importance of cultural understanding to peace operations. In describing the complications and entanglements of peace operations, Dr. Yates writes:

"Perhaps the most difficult adjustment troops must make is to the target area's culture...Ethnocentrism and cultural arrogance often accompany US troops into foreign countries...All US officers...should expect to be called on to demonstrate restraint, together with a keen sensitivity to political considerations and to alien cultures, either or both of which they might find repugnant or unintelligible.

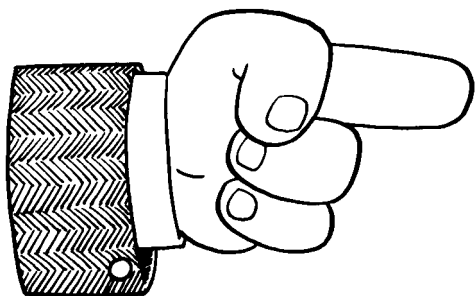


They should expect ambiguity, fluidity, constraints, dejection, frustration and the unknown--in short, they should expect the worst. If these expectations are not realized, they will be pleasantly surprised. If the worst does occur, officers and soldiers will be better prepared to deal with the situation." (Military Review, July-August 1997, pp. 60-61.)



3. Breadth of Treatment Some linguists may question the importance of exposure to such a wide variety of countries ("If my target language is Russian, why should I know anything about Armenia?") These country area studies provide a broader perspective--treating four NIS nations--for the following reasons.

a. Perspective Cultures and nations do not exist in a vacuum. What affects one country or region often directly impacts another. This sense of interdependency and interaction between cultures will tend to increase as the communications revolution expands.



Linguists are not immune to the dynamics of these mutually dependent cultures. The raw data of intelligence gathering--whether at a strategic, operational or tactical level--is affected by this interdependency. Breadth of outlook offers a context in which understanding can occur.

b. Versatility Our nation increasingly calls for linguists to meet diverse challenges, shift focus, maintain fluid tolerance, and move from one role or mission to another, rapidly and efficiently. We see this necessity to demonstrate versatility in the following ways:

(1) Global Deployability *"Under current US national strategy of engagement and enlargement, we have entered an age where virtually every regional or local crisis on the globe is considered a potential occasion for US military intervention. With the real possibility of deployment in support of peace operations facing every American servicemember at some point in his or her career, military leaders face the challenge of educating a steadily increasing portion of our forces..."*



(*"People of Whom We Know Nothing: When Doctrine Isn't Enough," LTC Douglas Scalard, Military Review, July-August 1997, p. 4.*) It becomes increasingly necessary for all military members to adapt a global perspective, and to possess expansive parameters of interest.

(2) Advisors to Command Linguists, as formal or informal subject-matter-cultural-experts, contribute much to preparing American military personnel for diverse peace operation challenges. Intelligence personnel--especially at the tactical level--often are the sole members of their unit who possess credible skills sufficient to advise commanders in the sensitive, often ambiguous, cultural dimensions of an area of operations. In the eyes of their command, linguists are subject matter experts. Quick changing mission requirements may pull a voice intercept operator from a strategic position and overnight immerse him or her in a tactical operation. Succinct, immediate cultural/religious information becomes necessary.

(3) Location Linguists often conduct their mission in a nation where the language and culture is other than that of their target language. For example, a Russian linguist may be stationed in Camp Zama, Japan; a Serbian and Croatian interpreter may have her home station in Italy. Awareness and knowledge of the target language is important. Understanding of host nation practices becomes crucial.



c. Combined Operations. These missions, conducted by forces of two or more allied nations acting together, require necessary understanding of a variety of cultures/nations. FM 100-5, Operations, states:

"Each partner in combined operations possesses a unique cultural identity, the result of language, values, religious systems, and economic and social outlooks. Nations with similar cultures are more likely to have similar aspirations. Further, their armed forces will face fewer obstacles to interoperability in a combined force structure. Nations with divergent cultural outlooks have to overcome greater obstacles in a coalition or alliance."



Armies reflect the national cultures that influence the way they operate. Sources of national pride and cultural sensitivities will vary widely, yet the combined force commander must accommodate them. Differences in work ethic, standards of living, religion, and discipline affect the way nations approach war.

Commanders cannot ignore these differences because they represent potential major problems. Even seemingly minor differences, such as dietary restrictions or officer/soldier relationships, can have great impact. Commanders may have to accommodate religious holidays, prayer calls, and other unique cultural traditions that are important to allies." (p. 5-2)

d. Reference The broad, four country treatment given in this section provides a ready, in hand reference for immediate use or further study.

4. Statistical Charts Each country begins with a statistical listing. Though not culture/religion specific, these charts assist understanding of underlying issues.

Country Area Studies--Introduction

For purposes of familiarity and comparison, and to offer a context, the following table lists data for countries with which many military personnel may be familiar.

Country	United States	Germany	Russian Federation	S. Korea	Ukraine
<u>Popula</u>	264 mil	81 mil	150 mil	46 mil	50,864,009
<u>% < 15</u>	22%	16%	22%	24%	20%
<u>Commo</u>					
TV	1:1	1:3	1:2.7	1:5	1:3
Radio	2:1	1:2	1:3	1:1	1:1.2
Phone	1:1	1:2	1:6	1:2	1:6
News	250:1000	402:1000	267:1000	N/A	118:1000
<u>Health</u>					
Life Ex	73/80	73/80	57/70	68/74	62/72
Hosp	1:218	1:126	1:80	1:379	1:81
Doctors	1:391	1:313	1:255	1:902	1:224
IMR	8:1000	6:1000	24:1000	21:1000	23:1000
<u>Income</u>	\$24,700	\$16,500	\$5,300	\$9,500	\$3,370
<u>Literacy</u>	96%	100%	98%	96%	98%

Population and % under 15 (% < 15) indicates the percentage of youth yet to attain prime military/employment age. A high % < 15 could predict possibilities for societal unrest in the near future.

Communication points out how quickly and readily information is transmitted to the whole populace. Along with the literacy rate, it suggests the abilities of a country to foster open thought and dialogue.

Health Concerns--life expectancy, hospital beds per population and doctors per 1,000 members of the country--are most readily apparent in the Infant Mortality Rate (IMR). This statistic relates the number of deaths in the first year per 1,000 live births.

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